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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000508

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED CAPTION)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PM SENIOR ADVISOR PREDICTS GOVERNMENT FORMATION
WILL TAKE TWO MONTHS

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D).

11. (C) Summary. In a February 15 meeting, Jafari senior advisor Hassan Hamid Hassan Al-Seneid told PolOffs that the Shia Coalition has placed conditions on Jafari assuming the premiership, as well as on any other Shia Coalition holder of positions in the new government. He estimated that government formation will take at least two months. He argued that the creation of the proposed National Security Council, even as an advisory body, would erode democratic progress and the authority of the Council of Representatives.

Seneid considered Nadim al-Jabiri's threat to leave the Coalition as a negotiating tool to ensure a high-level government post. He also characterized the Sadrist opposition to Ayad Allawi in government as unsophisticated and undemocratic and gave assurances that the Shia Coalition will easily resolve this issue. End Summary.

Shia Coalition Oversight

12. (C) Seneid readily admitted that the Jafari Government has been a failure on many counts, particularly with respect to the PM's advisors. As a new PM Senior Advisor, Seneid insisted that the mistakes of the past administration would not be repeated. Seneid said he advised Jafari to build a staff that reflects society and not just party membership. Seneid mentioned that not all of Jafari's advisors will be returning, including Adnan Ali al-Khadimy. (COMMENT: While it is clear Jafari is shaking up his staff, we hear conflicting reports as to how he plans to do so. Council of Ministers Secretary-General Dhia told poloffs February 14 that al-Khadimy will remain in a senior position on the PM's staff. Separately, Umma Party member (Shia progressive) Belsam al-Hilli told PolOff February 15 that she had been asked to become PM Jafari's Chief of Protocol. She has yet to make up her mind.)

13. (C) Seneid confirmed rumors that the Shia Coalition laid out the following set of conditions for assuming the premiership:

- PM must sign a letter of resignation dated one year from taking office that will be acted upon if the Shia Coalition reviews the PM's performance and finds it unsatisfactory.
- PM must accept plans and policies put forward by the seven-member Shia Coalition leadership committee.
- Each Shia Coalition cabinet minister (or deputy president)

must sign a letter of resignation.

- Regarding cabinet minister selection of Shia Coalition ministries, the designated Shia Coalition party must submit three candidates from which PM Jafari could choose. Jafari has the right to veto all three candidates. The party then has the opportunity to submit three more names. The PM must select from this group. If a party cannot provide three candidate names, the Shia Coalition would choose a competent candidate regardless of party.

Shia Coalition Rejects Proposed Council

14. (C) Seneid said he had advised PM Jafari to reject the proposal for a National Security Council. Seneid said that any kind of advisory body deciding the strategic vision or important issues of the country would undermine the power of the Council of Representatives. He equated the idea with going backwards in democratic time and explained that each change in government (CPA, IGC, IIG, ITG, Council of Representatives) has brought Iraq more democracy. Seneid charged that having a National Security Council would be like going back to the Iraqi Governing Council when an "elite committee" got to rule Iraq.

Forming a Unity Government

15. (C) Seneid dismissed the Sadrists' rhetoric against Ayad Allawi's participation in a unity government. He added that the Sadrists are young and inexperienced and easily handled by the Shia Coalition. He added that since Allawi won 25 Council of Representatives seats, he deserves a place in the new government of national unity.

16. (C) Seneid dismissed Nadim al-Jabiri's bid to leave the Shia Coalition and vote against Jafari's candidacy as just a ploy to secure the highest-level government position possible. Seneid downplayed the possibility that the Fadhila party would leave the Coalition to join with the Kurds,

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Sunnis and secularists because several Fadhila members do not agree with this tactic. He reasoned that it is too early for Jabiri to try and topple Jafari when the new government has no track record. "In a year, with poor performance, it could be easy for Nadim to attempt this move," said Seneid.

Security is Top Priority

17. (C) Seneid said that the new Jafari Government's first order of business would be securing Iraq's borders with its neighboring countries. Seneid cited the following points as requiring action:

- 1979 treaty with Iran does not specify border regulation.
- 1964 treaty with Syria does not specify border regulation.
- The borders between Iraq and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait are regulated by the Arab League.
- The Kurds have an agreement with Turkey but not Iraq.
- Jordan has no international treaty with Iraq regulating and protecting its borders.

Truth and Reconciliation

8 (C) With the prospect that the trials against Saddam may last five years, Seneid said that he saw nothing wrong with keeping Saddam on television for five years so the Iraqi

people would have the opportunity to hear the details of all the crimes against humanity the former dictator committed. Taking a dinner knife from the restaurant table and slicing the air while he spoke, Seneid said the only weapon of mass destruction in Iraq is Saddam. Seneid doubted that Saddam would receive the death sentence from the Dujail trial. He said the IHT made a mistake by starting with a trial that only concerned the Shia and not one that could have united all the Iraqi people.

19. (C) BIONOTE: Hasan Hamid Hassan Seneid was born in Nasariya, earned a Masters degree in Civil Engineering and a PhD in Islamic History. In 1971, Seneid joined the Dawa Party. In 1975, 1977, and 1979, he was arrested and released. In 1980, he was arrested again, tried by the Revolution Court and sentenced to life in prison. Six months later Seneid tried to escape from prison, was re-captured and sentenced to death. One month later on National Day, his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Seneid said he was severely tortured in prison where he suffered many broken bones, resulting in his permanent limp. Following his release from prison in 1983, he said that Dawa (with help from the KDP) smuggled him into Turkey, then Iran. He then spent time in the United Arab Emirates, Algieria, London, Syria, Lebanon, and Kuwait. His wife and son were also imprisoned. His wife died before the liberation of Iraq. In 1990, Seneid was elected to Dawa's Political Bureau, and is now a member of its leadership committee. After the liberation, he was first an advisor to the Ministry of Awqaf and then was elected to the Transitional National Assembly. He is a newly elected member of the Council of Representatives. Seneid has written eight collections of poetry. He is also the author of five books and is currently writing a book on torture methods used during the Saddam Regime.
KHALILZAD